

Kathmandu - The United States, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) delivered the final shipment in food assistance meeting a commitment of US 5 million dollars made in July 2009, for the UN World Food Programme's (WFP) operations. This food is used to support livelihoods of both conflict and drought-affected people across eight districts of Nepal. The food arrived in batches over the past six months with the last consignment arriving in February.

"Recent declining agricultural production has depressed many rural economies and increased the spread of hunger throughout Nepal. Our contribution demonstrates the United States' long-standing commitment to the welfare of the Nepali people," said USAID Director Dr. Kevin A. Rushing. "The 5 million dollars in assistance provided more than 3,500 tons of basic food staples, including rice and peas to Nepal's vulnerable poor, through World Food Programme."

Including this commitment, USAID has contributed food worth US \$12.7 million over the past year to WFP in Nepal and plans to continue to help address Nepal's food security concerns. USAID's food assistance helps conflict and drought-affected people across the country and also Bhutanese refugees in Eastern Nepal.

"We are grateful for this timely contribution and the continued support from USAID. This is an acknowledgement of both the seriousness of the deteriorating food security situation in Nepal and commitment to provide relief to families that remain extremely vulnerable to hunger," said Richard Ragan, WFP Country Representative. He further added, "This support has been extremely critical in meeting the needs of more than 450,000 people; however Nepal still requires additional assistance especially because of the growing number of hungry people in the country."

The 2008/2009 winter drought, among the worst in the country's history, destroyed crops across Nepal and placed 2 million people at high risk of food insecurity. Forty of Nepal's 75 districts are experiencing food deficits caused by the drought. Half of all Nepalese children under five are stunted, 39 percent are underweight and 13 percent are malnourished. Chronic malnutrition levels for children under 5 are as high as 80 percent in some areas and acute malnutrition rates are as high as 23 percent in some communities.